

## **Fooled Around and Fell in Love** by **evendanstevens**

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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**Summary:**

Jim takes Joyce out on a date in hopes of taking their relationship to the next level, but of course the past comes back to haunt him at the most inconvenient of times.

## Fooled Around and Fell in Love

### Author's Note:

- For [StarMaamMke](#).

fluffy one shot for @starmaammke

should maybe be 'm' rating for jizz jokes and heavy making out but we'll just leave it at a 't' for now...

Hopper looked up from his sandwich and across at Joyce. She was currently in the middle of picking off offending pieces of tomato from her own sandwich and carefully attempting to be sly and placing them on the discarded plastic sandwich bag. Panic immediately began to run through Hopper.

“Sorry, I didn’t realise you didn’t like tomatoes,” he said gruffly in a rushed apology. Terrified that his homemade sandwiches had completely ruined everything.

Joyce caught the look of trepidation on his face and felt herself begin to feel bad. “Oh no, no, I usually do! Well used to anyway, but then I had this really gross encounter with Will when he was a kid and there was vomit and tomatoes involved and ugh,” Joyce shook her head in disgust, scrunching up her nose in a way Hopper could only describe as adorable. When she looked back at him and saw that his face was a little more positive she gave him a small laugh and a smile. “I’ll spare you gory details,” she held up a hand between them and Hopper gave her a slight smirk in return. “The sandwiches are really great though, Hop,” she said and he gave her an appreciative smile and Joyce began to wonder since when did Jim Hopper get so touchy about his sandwiches?

The truth was, Hopper was nervous as hell. He and Joyce had been seeing each other in secret for some time now and he felt he was ready to make it public. He wanted to tell the kids, he wanted to take her out on real dates, and essentially get the ball rolling and maybe eventually ask her if she wanted to move in with him, and maybe even other important questions in the future. The past few months of

the pair of them sneaking around like teenagers had been the happiest Hopper had been in years. He wanted to be with her, in every way possible.

So he had organised a picnic for the two of them, down by the lake they used to play in as kids and make out by as teenagers. There had been a fair share of bad memories here. This had been where he'd taken her when he'd told her he was leaving Hawkins, and this had been where he had taken her two years later, realised he'd made a mistake and asked her to leave with him this time, and she had subsequently told him she was marrying Lonnie. But he figured, maybe this would be the good memory to trump all the rest, so he had remained hopeful.

Except all that hopefulness washed out of him as he stared at the discarded tomatoes. He cursed himself, feeling like a damn teenager again about to ask a girl to the prom. But then, this wasn't just any girl, this was Joyce Byers. And while he was pretty sure she felt the same way, what with the fact they had been screwing for months now, there was a deep seated fear within him that she didn't want anything more than just screwing.

His fears seemed to take a quick break when he noticed an array dollop of mayonnaise on the side of her mouth that she hadn't seemed to notice and an amused smile tugged at his lips. Before she could take another bite she noticed him staring at her.

"What?" she asked, staring from side to side, feeling somewhat fearful under his gaze.

Rather than tell her, Hopper placed his sandwich to the side of him and leaned forward, putting his hands at either side of her to balance himself. Joyce's eyes widened at the sudden close proximity and a soft gasp escaped her lips when Hopper delicately used his lips and tongue to clear the mess from her mouth. When he pulled away, her cheeks were inflamed and she looked up at him through long lashes.

"Well that's not embarrassing at all..." she looked away from him, completely mortified. The second she turned her head to the side however, Hopper's face followed her and he placed another gentle kiss against her lips, making her turn her head back round to face

him.

"I happen to find it pretty darn cute," he murmured down at her, eyes twinkling and a endeared smirk on his lips.

Joyce scoffed with a snort. "What? That I'm a total mess," she shook her head sheepishly before dipping her gaze from him which only resulted in him kissing her cheek. Her blush further increased.

"No more messier than me, sweetheart," he said as he continued to pepper her face with soft kisses, leading up to her ear. "And it's not like I haven't seen you with white stuff at the corner of your mouth before," he murmured before grazing her earlobe with his teeth.

Joyce gasped in feign disgust as she whacked his arm, dropping her sandwich to the side. Hopper withdrew from her with a chuckle. "You are so disgusting," her eyes wide in astonishment that only caused Hopper's laugh to amplify. Joyce couldn't help but giggle at him, a delightful sound to his ears that he could only silence as he brought his lips back to hers.

She smiled against his kiss, but the smile quickly faded when he brought his hand up to the back of her neck, brushing her jaw with his thumb. The kiss deepened as Hopper gently licked into her mouth, drawing out a moan from her that only made him harden the kiss. She brought up her arms and wrapped them around his neck, pulling him closer. He pushed her down till she was lying on the blanket beneath him. He hovered over her, trailing kisses along her jaw and down her neck, thigh resting between her legs.

He revelled in the desperate whimpers she made as he strategically pressed his thigh against her centre. He heard the smile in her sighs and began move his lips back up to her mouth.

"You better calm down there, cowboy," she muttered between kisses. She gasped excitedly when his hand came up and rested on her chest, toying with her right breast. "What if someone comes by..." she trailed off, his touch becoming intoxicating.

"Then I'm sure they'll be very jealous of the fact that it's me kissing you and not them," he murmured against her skin before leaving a

lingering kiss on her jaw.

Joyce giggled again in disbelief. "You are so ridiculous," she shook her head as he kissed her again.

As the desire within him continue to rise, he was a moment away from pulling her white, summery sweater over her head when they were rudely interrupted by fast bounding footsteps. Before they could even register the coming force, a large, black and white border collie was sniffing and padding all over their blanket.

Hopper abruptly pulled away from Joyce who sat up and laughed at the dog that was currently sticking its nose in the basket they'd brought.

"Hey buddy," Joyce cooed at the dog who scrambled over to her excitedly. He jumped up on her, causing Joyce to let out an excited squeal as the dog buried its face into her as she ruffled his fur affectionately.

"Get outta here, dang mutt," Hopper grumbled as he tried to shoo the dog away but nevertheless remained as Joyce showered it in attention. Hopper flashed Joyce an 'are you serious look' that caused her to laugh.

"What? He's friendly!" she insisted as she rubbed behind the dog's ears.

Hopper sighed before reluctantly reaching out and petting the dog. As much as he hated the intrusion, given what he and Joyce were on the verge of doing, he did love dogs. And he certainly loved the happy look on Joyce's face. He'd always known she liked dogs, having owned one herself in the past, but he found himself making a mental note for the future. A future he desperately hoped she would let him give her.

"Spencer, heel!" an impatient woman's voice in the distance caused the dog to flee and Hopper watched in amusement at the disappoint flash in Joyce's eyes at the absence of her new friend.

When he looked round to see the owner of the dog, all the

amusement rushed out of him in a second. The owner was Jennifer O'Neill, a young, blonde socialite from the richer side of town and a former one night stand of Hopper's. A one night stand he had taken to this exact spot after a town council party at her parent's big house. As Hopper remembered correctly, she didn't take too well to the fact he never called her and rebuked any of her further advances after that one night. A grudge she still made all too clear whenever he passed her on the street or at town events were she would commonly glare in his direction.

As far as Joyce knew, she only saw her as Marcia O'Neill's daughter. And from the few times she came into the store, she knew she was an entitled stuck up bitch, much like her mother. The pair of them loved nothing more than passively aggressively commenting on everything about Joyce, from the state of her nails to the speed she rang up their items. Due to where she lived in town, Joyce was thankful she never had to encounter them too much. And as much as she dreaded Jennifer's approaching appearance, she didn't nearly dread it as much as the man next to her.

"Sorry about that, he really has no manners," Jennifer laughed half-heartedly as she tried to wrangle the dog, clearly not having registered who's picnic blanket she was now standing at the edge of. As she looked up however, her polite smile faltered for a moment before returning to that passive aggressive grin Joyce had come to know.

"Well, look at this, Jim Hopper and Joyce Byers," she drew out their names as if the two names had no business being in the same sentence. Her eyes flashing between the two of them, lingering on Jim's face for longer than Joyce liked. "Well this sure is a surprise."

"Hi Jennifer," Joyce spoke up as she watched the younger woman eye Hopper like a piece of meat. "How's your mom doing?"

Her eyes did not immediately leave Hopper, much to Joyce's chagrin. "Mom's great, thanks," she flashed her a Cheshire grin as she turned to face her. "So what brings you guys here? Out on a date?"

Joyce looked to Hopper for an explanation. But right he was doing his damn best not to look at Jennifer, his eyes glued to the blanket

underneath him. The uncomfortableness he was feeling clearly present in his face and posture and Joyce's face fell into a frown.

"Something like that," Joyce grumbled as she continued to look at Hopper who refused to look back at her.

"Well it sure looks like it!" Jennifer exclaimed with a more than fake giggle, drawing back Joyce's attention as her head turned up toward her. "Looks awfully familiar too, come to think of it," Jennifer mused as her eyes scanned the scene in front of her. Joyce's eyebrows furrowed into a questioning look as she watched Jennifer's eyes travel back to Hopper. "Only I'm pretty sure it was night time wasn't it, Jim?"

Joyce's head snapped round to Hopper as she felt her stomach drop and her eyes widened. Hopper visibly cringed and he hung his head low as Joyce's eyes burned into him. From the few parts of his face Joyce could see, she saw his jaw clench and his fingers dig into his arms.

When no one said anything, Jennifer appeared satisfied with the discomfort and awkwardness she had caused and let out a content sight. "Well, I guess I'll be on my way," she shrugged as she led the dog away. "I'll see you around Chief," she purred at Hopper who still didn't move. Walking away, she threw her head over her shoulder and gave Joyce an irritably knowing look. "Have fun, Joyce. I know I sure did," she said with a menacing chuckle before continue to walk back toward the trees and out of sight.

Joyce wanted to run after her and wring her slim, pretty neck until it snapped. She was absolutely livid and mortified and saddened and a whole bunch of feelings she was never supposed to feel on a date with Hopper. Unwanted tears sprang to her eyes as Jennifer's words replayed in her head, unable to comprehend why someone would treat her like that. Suddenly she was transported back to when Lonnie and her had ended and the whispers she'd overheard. 'Of course that was never going to last' 'look at him then look at her' 'surprised he didn't walk sooner'. It was this ever present feeling of never being good enough. An insecurity of Joyce's that had only grown when she and Hopper had began whatever it was they were doing. She knew fine well of his history with the women in town, a

history she had foolishly ignored until it had just now appeared right in front of her.

When Hopper heard Joyce sniff, his head whipped up and his heart fell.

“Joyce...” he went to reach out and touch her leg comfortingly but he felt his chest hurt when she lightly pulled away from him.

“I’m gonna go home,” she muttered as she tried to collect herself and ran a delicate finger under her eye.

“Joyce, please don’t get upset...” he urged after her as she pulled herself to her feet.

“I’m not upset,” she stated defiantly as she tried to gather her things together. “I just realised that I’ve made a huge mistake and I want to go home.”

Hopper’s face fell into a saddened frown as he got to her feet. “Joyce, please you haven’t made a mistake,” he put his hand on her arm gently, pulling her attention to him.

“Yes I have, Hopper,” she snapped back at him. “It just took me a while to realise. We can’t do this, I can’t do this,” she muttered as she bent down and pulled her jacket into her arms and stepped back from him.

Hopper wanted to scream. He’d tried everything to make this as perfect as possible but of course his past just had to come up and bite him in the ass. Somewhere deep down, he’d always known his indiscretions would come back to haunt him and now they had and everything was ruined. But as he watched as Joyce began to walk away from him, he knew he couldn’t let this end. He couldn’t let her walk away, he wouldn’t let his past mistakes fuck up his future anymore.

“Joyce, wait,” he called after her and jogged up to stand in front of her. “Jennifer, look, it was years ago. It was a stupid mistake, I know that, but it’s not like it’s going to happen again!” he insisted, dipping his head to try and meet her eyes that were currently looking

everywhere except at him.

“But of course it will, Hopper! Jesus, you slept with half the women in this town, and us running around, sneaking around together is just another one of your ‘flings’ and that’s fine. I mean it’s not like I didn’t have my own pain to get out of my system. I’d just rather we ended things now before I get anymore...” she trailed off as she looked up and down at his hurt expression and tried desperately not to launch herself into his arms. “It’s okay, Hop, really,” she nodded to him reassuringly before manoeuvring past him.

Hopper let her words sink in with a defeated sigh before turning back toward her and grabbing her arm, stopping her. “No it’s not ok Joyce, it’s bullshit! Everything that just came out of your mouth is bullshit! You’re just telling yourself that cause you’re scared but you shouldn’t be scared, Joyce I’m not like that anymore!”

“How am I supposed to know that, Hopper?” her voice cracked in a way that made his heart want to shatter into pieces and he watched in despair as a escaped tear ran down her cheek. “How am I supposed to know that this isn’t just a drawn out screw? How am I supposed to know that you’re not just going to stop calling me one day and next thing I know I see you out on the town with some younger, blonder, prettier woman? It’s just easier for me to walk out right now than wait for the day you realise you can’t do this and leave,” she sighed putting her hand on her head before her body completely slumped in exhaustion at her outburst of insecurities.

“Ask me how many,” Hopper’s voice was stern and unwavering, causing her to look up at him questioningly.

“What?”

“Ask me how many women I’ve slept with in the past year and a half.”

“Hopper come on, I don’t wanna...”

“Ask me, Joyce.”

Joyce sighed and shook her head. “I don’t know, Hopper, how

many?”

“One,” he answered automatically and took a step toward her as he watched the surprise spread over her face. “Now ask me how many women I plan on sleeping with in the future.”

“Hopper, please can we just...”

“Ask.”

“Jesus, how many?” Joyce threw her hands in the air in an exasperated shrug.

“Just the one,” Hopper closed the space between and stared down at her, all tall and imposing in the same way Joyce couldn’t help but find endearing. “Joyce, there is no one else. I can’t go back and change what I did and I’m sorry for that. But I’m done being that person. I don’t want to go back to doing especially now that I have...” he stopped himself when he saw her eyes widen in anticipation. He sighed and looked down and back up at her. “I want to be with you, Joyce. Not just screwing around, I want to take you out on dates, I want to bring flowers to your work, I want to tell the kids about us, I want to fucking hold your hand walking down the street and do all that other bullshit that couples fucking do, I don’t know,” he looked away from a moment in pure embarrassment and missed the adoring smile on Joyce’s face.

“That’s why I planned this whole stupid picnic thing,” he gestured behind him at their abandoned picnic basket. “I was gonna see if you wanted to give this thing a try for real.” His eyes came up to meet her face, trying so hard to find any indication that this was something she wanted and when he came up blank he pulled away from her, pacing away and running a hand through his hair. “Forget it, forget I said anything,” he grumbled, completely mortified.

“Jim Hopper,” Joyce took a step toward him and looked up at him in amazement. “Are you asking me to go steady with you?”

Jim glared at her and she smiled teasingly. “Oh, piss off, Joyce,” he shook his head wanting the ground to swallow him whole.

She chuckled lightly and crossed her arms, kicking the ground at her feet. "You got a letterman jacket hidden at the bottom of that basket?" she arched a mocking brow at him and he groaned in embarrassment.

"Can we just forget about this whole thing? Just do me a solid please and never bring it up again," he pleaded with her, the desperation in his voice making her laugh again. She took another step toward him.

"But what if I don't want to forget?" she stepped in front of him, her brown doe eyes seeking out his pale blue. "What if I want everything you just said?"

Hopper's entire body froze and he stared at her, mouth agape. "Wait, you do?"

She shrugged and looked down at his hands and taking his hand in her two, gently tracing her finger along his palm. "Well it's not like I haven't thought about it. I've thought about it a lot actually. I just figured you would never want something like that," she shrugged again, nervously. With his free hand he cupped her cheek and lightly pushed her face up to meet his gaze.

"I really do want it, Joyce. Jesus, you have no idea how much I want this," he admitted, thinking to himself he might as well embrace the heart he was currently sporting on his sleeve.

Joyce let out a delightful little laugh and looked up at him adoringly. "Well if the offer still stands, I'm sure I wouldn't mind dating you for real, Jim Hopper," at that moment, it was the most romantic thing she had ever said to him. It wasn't perfect, but it was so unapologetically her, so to him it was beyond perfect. His mouth formed into a smile that reached his eyes and he kissed her, humming in happiness against her lips.

When he pulled away she was smiling up at him, a mischievous grin on her face. "Besides I'm sure the flowers will really brighten up the register," she teased him.

"Oh, shut up," he grumbled, however clearly amused, as his cheeks reddened. He certainly wasn't forgetting his embarrassingly sappy

declaration anytime soon. But none of that mattered now, he thought to himself as he hoisted Joyce off the ground and into his embrace, pressing a hard kiss to her lips to cut off her laughter.

None of it, not his past, not hers, mattered anymore. Because now he got to hold her in his arms, he got to kiss her freely without having to just sneak a quick one when no one was looking. He got to hold her hand, he got to lean over the register and leave a kiss on her cheek in front of the waiting customers behind him that caused her to blush furiously. He got to be with her without the complications of the kids finding out because now they knew and they were more than pleased about it. He got to fall asleep with her in his arms knowing he didn't need to sneak out before dawn, he got to put his arm around her shoulder and have her nestle into his side during family movie nights. Finally, their time had come.

And he got to date Joyce Byers.